HERE's news

HOTEL EMPLOYEES AND RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION

NEW STUDY ATTACKS THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS FOR OSHA's PROPOSED REGULATION OF WORKPLACE SMOKING

Washington, D.C. -- November 17, 1995 --

Today the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union praised the Congressional Research Service report which raises serious questions about the scientific basis for recent OSHA attempts to severely regulate second-hand smoke in the American workplace. In testimony before a Senate subcommittee, CRS concluded that "the statistical evidence does not appear to support a conclusion that there are substantial health effects of passive smoking."

The CRS report, entitled "Environmental Tobacco Smoke and Lung Cancer Risk," questions the necessity of OSHA's proposed regulations on second-hand smoke. The issue of workplace smoking is a serious matter to the industry and all of the workers, including our members, whose livelihood depends upon a strong economy and a strong industry.

General President Edward T. Hanley has expressed serious concern for over twenty years about the health, safety and working conditions of our members. However, having been involved in numerous legislative battles over the last twenty years we will not be swayed by people on any side of the issue who have a strictly political agenda.

Therefore, we are pleased to have CRS vindicate our view that the proposed OSHA regulations are not supported by scientific study, and that second-hand smoke is not as dangerous as feared. President Hanley has said many times that "certainly if second-hand smoke represented a lethal threat to our members we would lead the charge to eliminate it." Workplace air quality is an important issue, but we urge OSHA to rethink its approach in light of the latest CRS findings.

The history of our union is one that shows the ability to work in a cooperative manner with industry in matters of mutual benefit. We do not need government coercion - in fact, we are pleased that the hotel and restaurant industry has responded voluntarily to customer demand, and already, many restaurants, hotels and airlines have created non-smoking sections or have gone smoke-free in response to its customers.

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A government ban would have a devastating impact on our members because it would lead to a marked decline in the number of international visitors, most of whom smoke. We are aware of the cynicism of people in official positions who believe this last comment is outrageous. Our response to them is that the livelihood of our members is not outrageous and anyone who knows anything about our industry understands that a government ban will create a serious problem in the already declining number of international visitors.

The bottom line is: American workers should not lose their jobs to regulations based on faulty scientific data. The market should be left alone to provide for the traveling public. The report proves that this is one thing that OSHA does not need to regulate.

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